

Runs in the Family

"Crossing the starting line may be an act of courage, but crossing the finish line is an act of faith.

Faith is what keeps us going when nothing else will. Faith is the emotion that will give you victory over your past, the demons in your soul, & all of those voices that tell you what you can & cannot do & can & cannot be."

— John Bingham

I have long since credited myself with the success of my sisters in running marathons.

It started in Houston in July of 1971 as we awaited word on the transport of our Mom's ashes from the crematory in San Diego to Arlington National Cemetery. Dad was highly motivated and irritated over the delays, and each day he would call Jack Tipton in Falls Church, VA to ask if he knew of any progress at Arlington. And every day it was the same response: "Nothing yet, Captain - I'll call you when we learn something new."

I had come down to Houston from the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and each day a small group of us (Art Geldbach, Paul Elder, and myself) would go out at the noon hour and jog for a couple of miles. Art, a self-made individual from a poor family in the Bronx, would always cut across any corners on the route to get an edge on Paul and me. My own edge was when we hit the downside of a hill - Paul would call me The Downhill Runner. My secret was: controlled falling. I had read that homo sapiens running was just controlled falling, and that was the attitude I took on going down hill: just keep falling forward with big strides. The positive memory was, after running, we would go to the Field House and get a strawberry milkshake.

After waiting in Houston, I suggested that we go down to the track at Rice Institute and jog some. Patti agreed, and away we went.

We talked some as we went around the track. Finally, when we finished after 8 laps, I told Patti that we had run two miles. "Wow!" she exclaimed, "That's the farthest I have ever run in my life!" Before long she was doing more and more, and before long, so was Penny.

Over the years, how many miles have been run by members of the family? How many marathons have been completed?

Penelope Blackledge Woods:

Here is my recollection of marathons completed. I'll ask Fred to add on his, but no promises. Fred is not even running 10Ks today. We are walking. In the past, we ran too many 10Ks to remember, plus half marathons. It gave us a good base for today, in our 80's.

I remember marathons by incidents, not "place won" since you're running against 3,000 to 5,000 other people. Places are for the elite runners. Our mundane goal was a 10-minute pace for 26 miles, 385 yards. This is about 4 hour, 20 minutes. Each marathon requires at least 3 months of consistent training and increasing mileage to the point of 60 miles per week toward the end. Also, there should be 2-3 "20-milers" on the training schedule in order to go "prepared" into a marathon. We trained in the am, the pm, at night, in the rain, but not in the wind.

I ran/completed 5 marathons between the ages of 40 and 42 [1976-1978]. The first was San Francisco, CA (10 miles of the 26 were up hills - a shock, to our bodies and psyche). I ran with my friend, Luanne who had come up to me earlier and said, "I'll train with you every step of the way if you'll run the San Francisco Marathon with me." Offers like this are rare so I accepted, especially since Luanne had already completed one marathon. They say the last 6 miles of a marathon represent 50% of the race because it's where most people "hit the wall." When Luanne and I reached that mark, the last 6 miles, I said, "Just think, we have only 6 little miles to go." Immediately she said, "I'm going to have to walk. You go ahead."

So she walked and I continued jogging. Later she said that my remark had psychologically defeated her because "6 miles to go" equals another solid hour of running. Goal accomplished: 10-minute pace.

The second marathon was Honolulu, Hawaii. Luanne and I trained religiously and Fred said he would go, too. But Fred didn't train much because he was too busy working. Nevertheless, he ran the Honolulu marathon and beat both of us. We were miffed. The race began at 5 am with a canon shot. There was at least an hour of rain along the way, which made our feet turn blue from our blue running shoes. I pulled a calf muscle the last one and one-half miles and began limping. I inspired myself by thinking, "This is what the onlookers like to see, a struggling finisher who doesn't give up." At the end, all finishers were treated to a Shiatsu back massage as we lay prone on mats. Even though our legs were lead, we were instructed to walk or run the next morning in order to work out the considerable lactic acid in our legs and in order to recover more quickly from the ordeal. I knocked off another 5 minutes of time.

The third marathon was Los Alamitos, CA, right in my own back yard. It was flat. I wanted to break 4 hours and ran into the finish line hearing people yelling my name and encouraging me. I just made it: 3 hours and 59 minutes. (This is my overall record time).

The fourth marathon was the initial Long Beach marathon. Carrie, Vicki, and I were running, promising each other to keep a 10-minute pace. But Carrie started out like

wild fire, declaring, "Oh, I feel so good; I can't stop." Vicki and I made the mistake of trying to keep up with Carrie and ended up doing some walking during the latter portion. We had not followed our own rules. I was so mad at my ridiculous time that I later wrote RYOR (Run Your Own Race) over and over in my training log. Nevertheless, I won a medal for women 45 and under simply because there were not many women that age running in this first Long Beach marathon.

In order to punish myself further, I entered the Los Alamitos Marathon a second time so that I could experience "back-to-back" marathons which are run within two weeks of each other. This, of course, is suicide because the body demands 1-3 months recovery before another marathon is attempted. I ran this one on my own with no family member caring or concerned with Maniac Mom. At the 20-mile mark someone threw several water balloons at me which drenched my spirit and my body. I tried to pretend it was "refreshing", but began to feel sorry for myself. I finished with another ridiculous time and decided my marathon career was over. Am I going to me a mother shouting from the bathtub, "It's open-can night for dinner" or am I going to save the marriage? The Marriage won and here I am today with almost 59 years on the marriage books.

Hugs, Penn

Patti Blackledge Price Blide *(total of 13):*



1973 **Dallas White Rock Marathon** 1st Place 4 hrs 20 min

1975 **Boston Marathon** 19th Place (Women) 3 hrs 19 min

San Antonio Marathon 3 hrs 19 min

Dallas Marathon 3 hrs 19 min

1978 (?) **Galveston Marathon** 1st Place (Masters Women) ? hrs ? min *(see photo at left)* (very windy)

Richard W. Blide *(total of 7):*

1976 Nov	Tulsa Marathon	3 hrs 13 min
1976 Apr	Boston Marathon	3 hrs 28 min

Norvell Frederick Woods: